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ABSTRACT

The kinds of students that transferred into or out of 30 postsecondary institutions, including universities, senior colleges, junior colleges, and community colleges, were studied. Several types of institutions were assessed: residential, commuter, traditionally black, and special focus (military, medical, technical, and agricultural). Also considered were the performance of transfer students. The study population consisted of over 63,000 transfer students who were attending a state college system in 1983. Students who transferred within the system itself were the primary focus. Comparisons were made by level of institution and were broken down by gender and minority status. The numbers of students transferring and their performance before and after transfer were also assessed by type of institution. It was found that when students transfer, typically their grade point average (GPA) increases, with the exception of students transferring to universities. Some institutions were sending a large number of students experiencing difficulties at that institution (typically at the universities) to other institutions where the students experienced an increase in GPA. (SW)

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TRANSFER ACTIVITY: A CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL STUDY

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Factors That Influence Transfer Activity:
A Cross-Institutional Study

Transfer activity for undergraduate students among colleges and universities has been increasing over the past decade. Many instututions that traditionally were concerned only with recruiting beginning freshmen now depend heavily upon transfer students to fill places left by the attrition of native students. Thus the transfer student has assumed an important - if not key - place in both public and private institutions. Penalties that inhibited transfer activity have generally been softened if not abolished with the result thatstudents'options have increased dramatically in terms of transferring to another institution. It can be assumed that transfer activity is motivated by many of the same factors that are involved in attrition: academic performance, financial concerns, personal relationships and problems, and self-development. Students can now "shop around" for individual courses or a major field of study among colleges and universities with the awareness that their previous cumulation of college credits will be accepted by most any other institution.

This paper compares over 30 institutions including universities, senior colleges, junior colleges, and community colleges. Several types of institutions are included - residential, commuter, traditionally black, and special focuses (military, medical, technical, and agricultural). The total student population is over 150,000, of which over 63,000 are transfer students. The primary aim of this study is to determine what types of students are attracted to what types of institutions. This research focuses not only on what kind of students transfer into the institution, but equally important, what kinds of students transfer out of these institutions and into other institutions. Also of interest is the performance of transfer students at their prior institution as well as their perfor-

mance at the present institution.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Several studies have focused on various aspects of the transfer student phenomenon. State University of New York (1981) found that transfer students represented 8.5 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment for the Fall 1979 term. Furthermore, the majority of transfer students continued to come from other institutions that were part of the State University System.

In a study of student transfers within the University System of Georgia, Bryson (1981) reported that 1137 students transferred to GSU from other System institutions in fiscal year 1979, with 1022 such transfers in 1980. The majority of these students transferred from the University of Georgia, Clayton Junior College, Kennesaw College, and Atlanta Junior College (all University System of Georgia institutions). The largest numbers of students leaving Georgia State University transferred to the University of Georgia, Kennesaw College, Clayton Junior College, Southern Technical Institute, and Georgia Institute of Technology.

Bragg (1982b) looked at the number and mobility patterns of Illinois 2-year college students who transferred to 4-year institutions. She found a small decline in the number of such transfers between Fall 1973 and Fall 1979. Two-thirds of the transfer students were between the ages of 21 and 24 while 17% were between 25 and 30. As might be expected, half the transfers were female. Forty-one percent enrolled in a liberal arts program, with 10% entering business programs and 19% "undeclared". The average pretransfer GPA was found to be 2.93. Bragg (1982a) analyzed the rates of persistence and achievement of over 10,000 Illinois transfer students. The overall attrition rate for the students after one year was 21%, with a

higher proportion of students with low grades appearing to discontinue enrollment. The GPA's declined in the first term after transfer and rose in the second term, but not to the pre-transfer levels. Slark and Bateman (1982) surveyed community college students who had transferred to 4-year colleges. They found that 62% of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 29, and 17% were over thirty. Thirty-one percent of the students had a GPA between 2.6 and 3.0, while 32% had a GPA over 3.0. The reasons given most often for first attending a community college were that it was close to home and inexpensive.

In a study of transfer and nontransfer students, Peng (1978) found that one-fourth of the 2-year college students transferred to a 4-year institution. Sixteen percent of 4-year college students transferred to another 4-year institution; when compared with persisters, these students had higher college grades and socioeconomic status, but lower ability test scores.

Slark (1982) also looked at reverse transfer students (community college students who had previously attended a 4-year institution). She found that 21% of all credit students at Santa Ana College had previously attended a 4-year institution, and that 38% of these had attended a college out of the state or country. Seven percent were simultaneously enrolled at a 4-year institution. Almost half (41%) of the students had left the 4-year college because they had obtained the degree they sought, while only 4% left because of academic difficulties.

A survey conducted in the Los Rios Community College District (Renkiewicz, Hirsch, Drummond, and Mitchell, 1982) showed that almost one-fifth (19.6%) of the respondents were reverse transfer students. One-fourth (25.7%) had previously attended a community college, and over half (54.7%) had no prior college experience. Of the graduates from a 4-year

institution, 82% were employed, while almost 70% of the first time students were employed. Financial reasons or uncertainty about their major were reasons given most often for transferring by students who had left a 4-year institution without a degree.

Brimm and Achilles (1976) examined the performance of reverse transfer students who later returned to a 4-year institution. These were students who originally left the 4-year institution due to poor academic performance. After their return to a 4-year institution, their grades improved with each quarter's course work.

METHODS

The data for this paper include over 63,000 students who were transfer students and were attending the state college system in 1983. Students who transferred within the system itself are the primary focus of the paper.

The first comparisons are by level of institution - junior, senior, or university - for transfer activity flow. The data are broken down by gender and minority status to determine if these factors are significant components in the dynamics of transferring or are apparent barriers to transfer. The next stage of the analysis focuses on the individual institutions by type of institution. The comparison is both of numbers of students transferring and performance before and after transfer.

FINDINGS

Patterns of Transfer Flow and Performance

In Figure 1 the transfer flow for all transfer students within the system itself is given. It can be seen that when students transfer from senior or junior colleges, or from outside the system into one of the

universities there is a tendency to experience a drop in grade point average (GPA). This drop varies from .29 for those outside the system to .55 for transfers from junior colleges. In contrast, when transferring from a university to a senior college the average increase in GPA is .62; to a junior college the increase is .68. Transferring from a senior to a junior college yields an increase on average of .45.

For black females, Figure 2 shows a generally similar pattern. Those coming from outside institutions do, however, tend to have drops in their GPA at all levels. Transfers within the university level on average result in a larger increase in GPA (.32) than is found for all students (.08). The transfer activity of black males is pictured in Figure 3. It is in many ways similar to that of all students with the exception that transfer within the senior level or junior level does not show an increase in GPA.

Transfer flow for white females is presented in Figure 4. For this group an average increase in GPA can be expected when transferring except for transfers to a university from a junior college, senior college, or outside the system. The flow of transfer activities for white males is given in Figure 5. The pattern is similar to that of white females except that the differences in GPA are often greater, especially for transferring out of a university.

Number of Transfer Students

Student transfer activity among types of system institutions is presented in Table 1. This table focuses upon selected sending institutions. The technical university I sends most transfer students to state university II (over 470). Technical university I sent over 350 to technical college VI. None of the technical university's transfer students were attending state university III in 1983. The state universities II and III sent most

of their transfers to each other, with one sending over 300, and the other sending over 1500. State university II sends students to commuter senior college V, senior college VII, technical university I, and community college VIII. The other state university III sends students to one of three senior colleges or commuter senior college V.

Two senior colleges IV and VII sent the highest number of their students to the two state universities II and III (242 and 387 to one university, 420 and 254 to the other). The commuter senior college V sent the majority of its transfers to the state universities (327 and 154) and the technical college VI (188). The technical college VI sent over 100 students to the commuter senior college V and over 80 students to state university II. Both community colleges VIII and ~~X~~ had the largest number of students transfer to the same state university II (313 and 598).

Table 2 focuses upon selected receiving institutions. The technical university I received most of its students from the two state universities II and III (130 and 151). State university II received the most students from the other state university III (1522), followed by community college IX (598), the technical university I (470), senior college VII (387), commuter senior college V (327), and another community college VIII (313). State university III received the highest number of transfers from a senior college (420), the agricultural junior college (319), state university II (308), and a community college (296).

One senior college received over 200 students from a state university and over 200 from a commuter senior college. The commuter senior college V received over 200 transfers from state university II. The technical college VI received over 350 students from the technical university I, and over 180 from the commuter senior college V. The other senior college received most of its transfers from the state universities III and II (182

and 138). Both community colleges received the highest number of students from the same state university II (116 and 89), followed by the same senior college VII (77 and 86). One community college VIII received 12 students from the technical university; the other IX received 37.

Predicted Performance of Transfer Students

Tables 3 and 4 present the amount by which academic performance is over or under predicted for transfer students. Academic performance as measured by GPA was predicted at the students' new institution by a multiple regression equation that had a dependent variable of present GPA with independent variables of transfer GPA and credit hours transferred. The residual between actual and predicted GPA based upon transfer GPA and credit hours accepted reflects the change that can be attributed to the institution. This residual was the measure of over or under predicted performance.

Table 3 focuses upon selected sending institutions. It was found that former students from the technical University I increased their GPA's on average by half of a letter grade after transferring. Students transferring from state university II increased their GPA's on average by .22 of a letter grade. The largest increases were for students who transferred to a senior college (.70), a commuter senior college (.62), and the medical school (.54). The smallest increase was for students who transferred to the state university III (.05).

Former students from state university III experienced on average an increase of .19 of a letter grade in their GPA at their new institution. The highest increase was .59 for students at a community college.

Students from senior college IV increased their GPA on average by .03 of a letter grade by transferring to another institution. The highest

increase was for students who transferred to one community college (.54); the largest decrease in GPA was for students who transferred to senior college VII (.32).

Students who had transferred from the commuter senior college V had an average increase of .03 in their GPA's. Transfer students from the technical college VI averaged an increase in their GPA's of .08. Those received by state university III had an increase in GPA of .09, while those received by the other state university II experienced on average drop in GPA of .05. Transfer students from a senior college VII found on average a decline of .07 in their GPA's.

Students from one community college VIII experienced an average decline in GPA of .76 when transferred. The decreases ranged from .46 for students who transferred to state university III, to .94 for students at the commuter senior college V. Students from community college IX on average increased their GPA's by .16.

Table 4 focuses upon selected receiving institutions. Students recieved by state university II experienced an average decline in GPA of .04. The largest decline was for students from a traditionally minority institution (.99). Students from the technical university I experienced an average increase in GPA of .40. The average decline in GPA for students transferring to the other state university III was also .04. The greatest decline was for students from one of the selected community colleges VIII (.46).

Students received by senior college IV had an average decrease in GPA of .07. The largest decrease was for students from a traditionally minority institution (.39); the largest increase was for those from the technical university I (.35).

Transfer students in commuter senior college V on average increased their GPA's by .12. Students who transferred from community college VIII decreased their GPA's on average by .94, while those from the state universities II and III increased their GPA 's by .26 and .33. Transfers received by the technical college VI experienced an average increase in GPA of .03. Student who went to senior college VII experienced an average a decline of .13. Those students who transferred to commuter college VII tended to increase their GPA by .22, in contrast to those who went to commuter college IX and on average increased their GPA's by only .01.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper is concerned with determining whether such factors as type of institution, gender, and minority status have a substantial impact upon undergraduate transfer activity. The paper compares over 30 institutions from a state college system that includes universities, senior, junior, and community colleges. Various types of institutions are included (residential, commuter, traditionally minority, military, medical, technical, and agricultural). From over a total of 150,000 students, it was found that over 63,000 were transfer students.

An analysis of the data found that when students transfer, typically their GPA increases. The exception is when transferring to a university level institution from system junior and senior colleges or from outside the system. This finding held true when analyzed by gender and minority status. The analysis of the flow of students between types of colleges revealed a high level of transfer activity among the various types of institutions. Additionally, the predicted level of performance after transferring was compared with the actual level of performance.

IMPLICATIONS

Undergraduate transfer activity has become very vigorous and widespread. A key finding of this study has been that most transfer activity results in an increase in students' GPA with the exception of students transferring to universities. Reviewing the details of transfer flow, it was found that some institutions were sending large numbers of students who were apparently having difficulty at that institution (typically these are universities) to other institutions where the students experienced an increase in GPA.

Some institutions have obviously become heavily dependent upon the flow of transfer students. The traditional recruitment efforts for beginning freshmen include elaborate publicity material and intensive individual contacts. It appears that recruitment strategies for transfer students trail behind those for beginning freshmen in both intensity and sophistication. A strong downward trend in high school graduates will continue to be experienced until the mid 1990's. In light of this trend it has become imperative for many institutions to focus both on the retention of their present students and on attracting transfer students. The market strategy to attract transfer students may well have to be different from the strategy for attracting freshmen students. Such factors as an active admission policy for all semesters or quarters (not just fall) will need to be a prime component in attracting transfer students. However, the primary activity for attracting transfer students must necessarily focus upon a particular institution's unique place in the overall flow of transfer students.

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Figure 1

Undergraduate Transfer Activity by Type of Institution

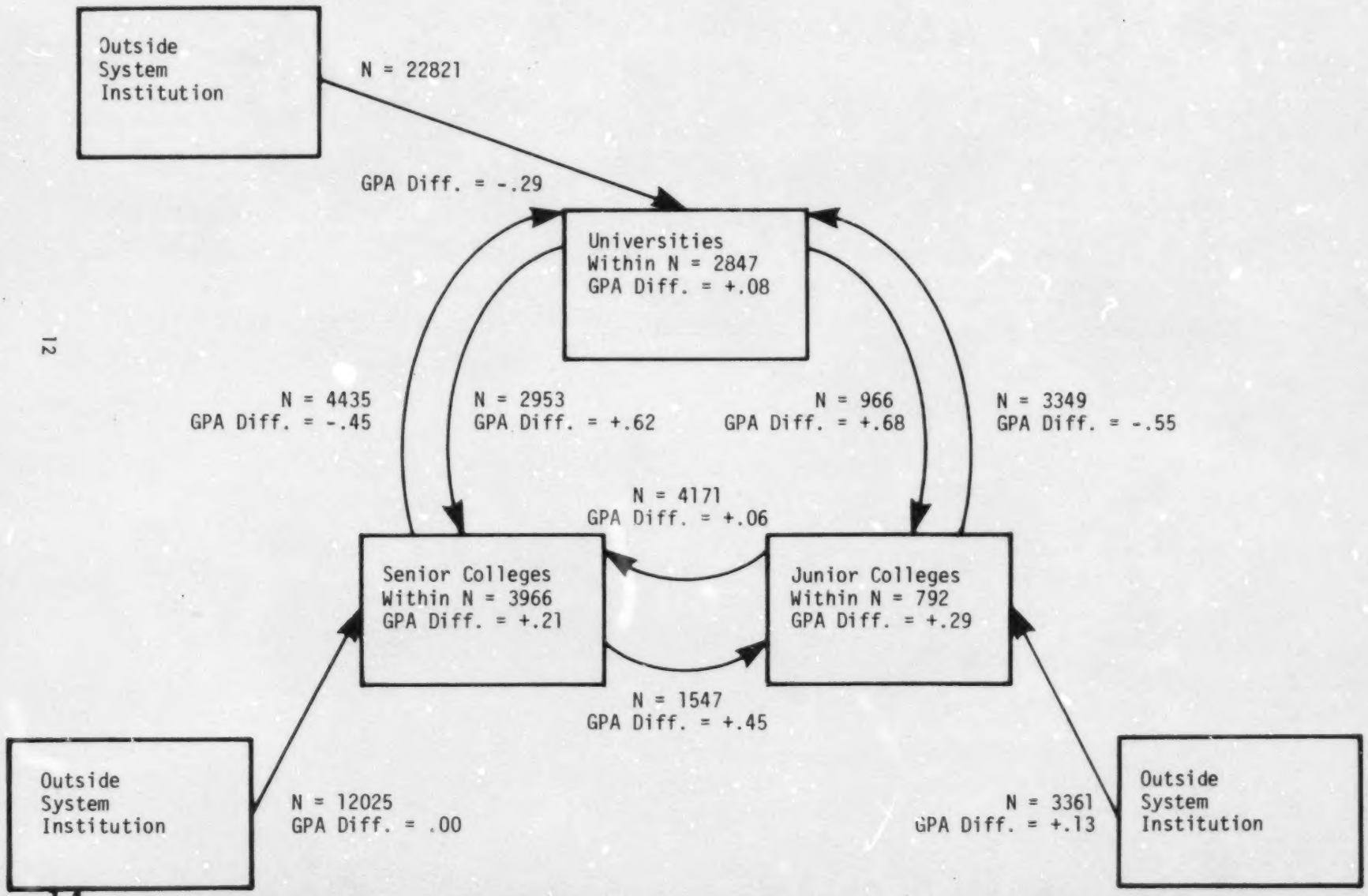

Figure 2

Undergraduate Transfer Activity by Type of Institution for Black Females

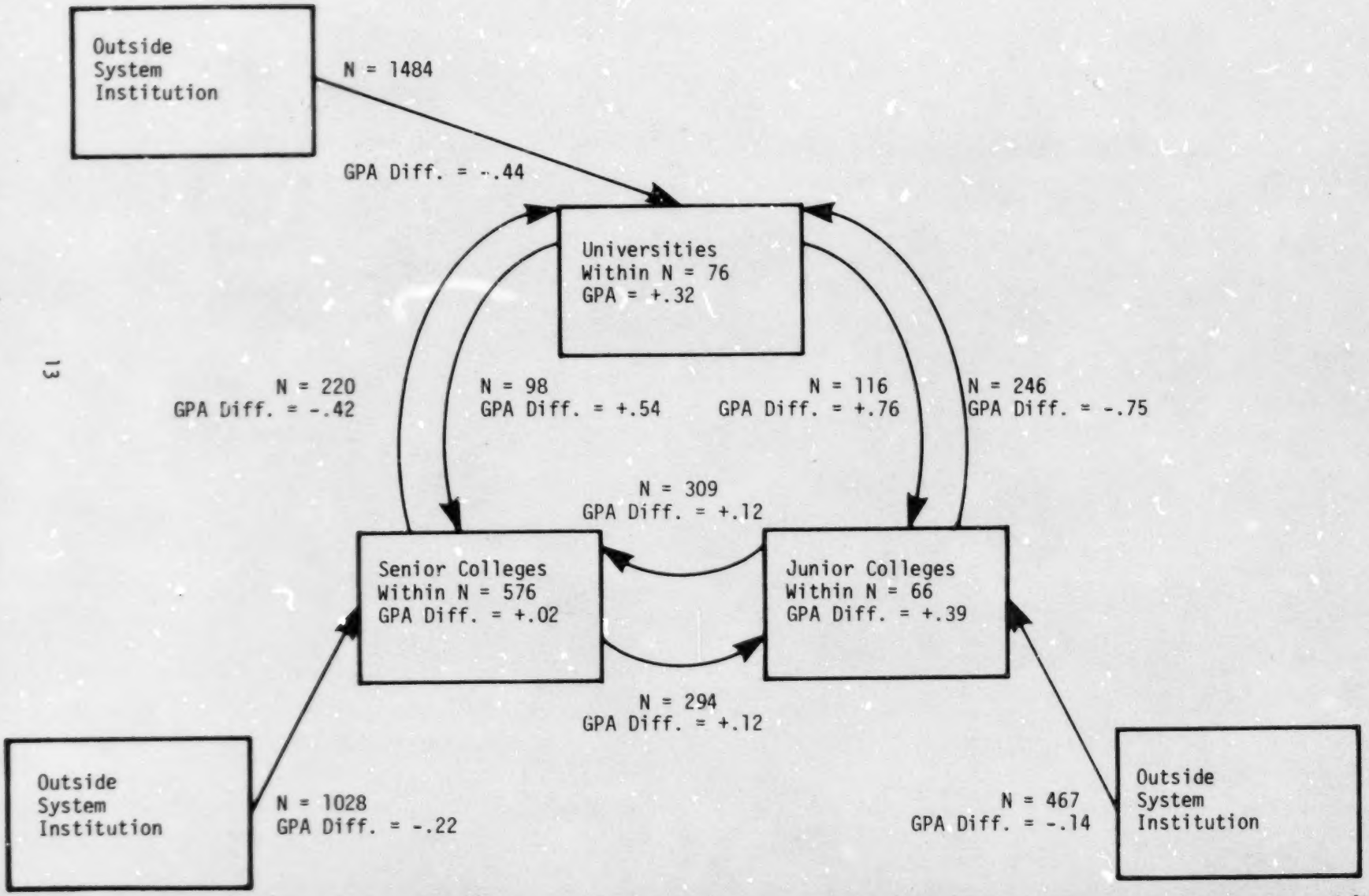

Figure 3

Undergraduate Transfer Activity by Type of Institution for Black Males

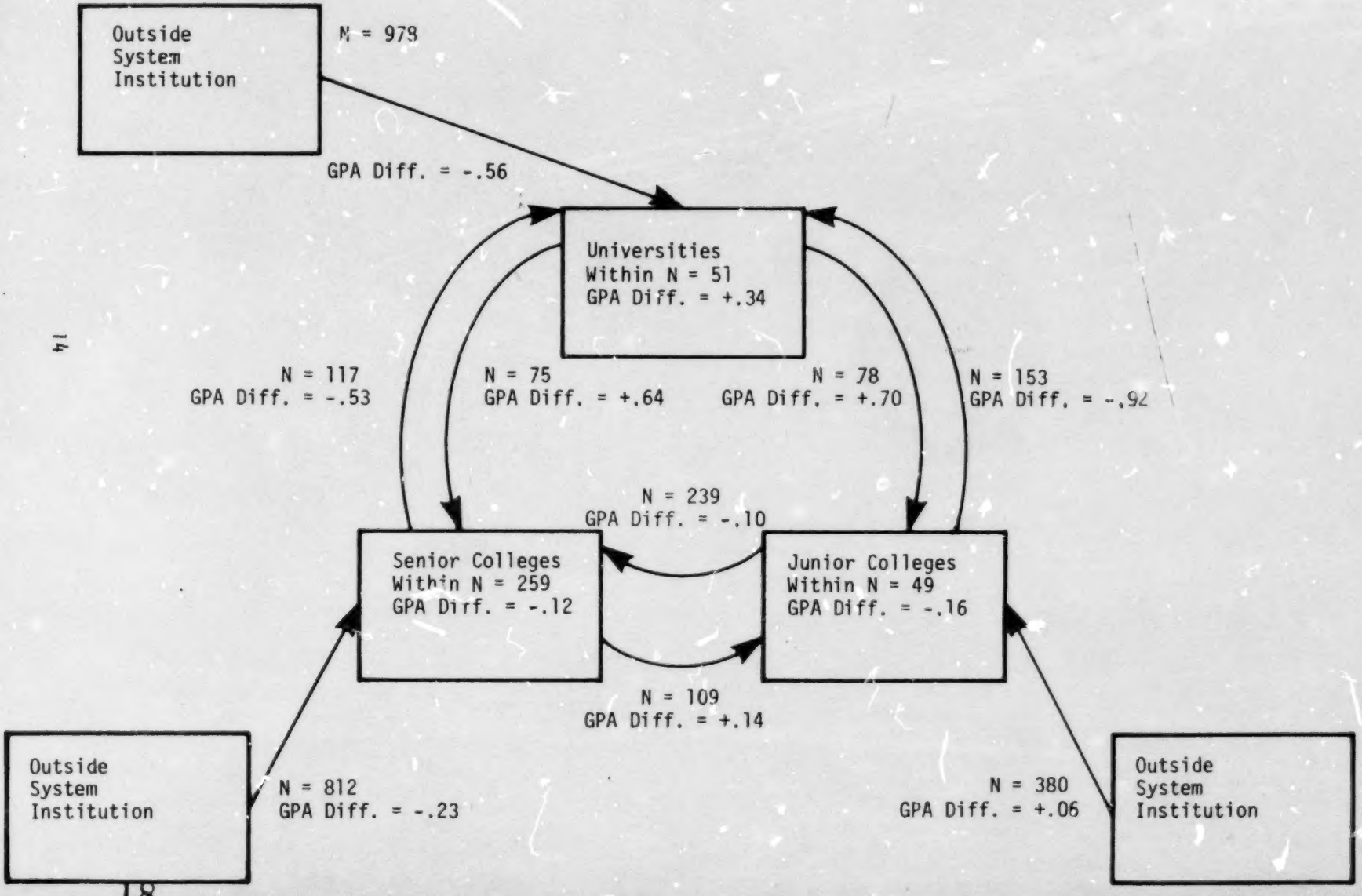
Outside System Institution
N = 978
GPA Diff. = -.56
Universities Within N = 51 GPA Diff. = +.34
N = 117 GPA Diff. = -.53
N = 75 GPA Diff. = +.64
N = 78 GPA Diff. = +.70
N = 153 GPA Diff. = -.92
N = 239 GPA Diff. = -.10
Senior Colleges Within N = 259 GPA Diff. = -.12
Junior Colleges Within N = 49 GPA Diff. = -.16
N = 109 GPA Diff. = +.14
Outside System Institution
N = 812 GPA Diff. = -.23
N = 380 GPA Diff. = +.06
Outside System Institution

Figure 4

Undergraduate Transfer Activity by Type of Institution for White Females

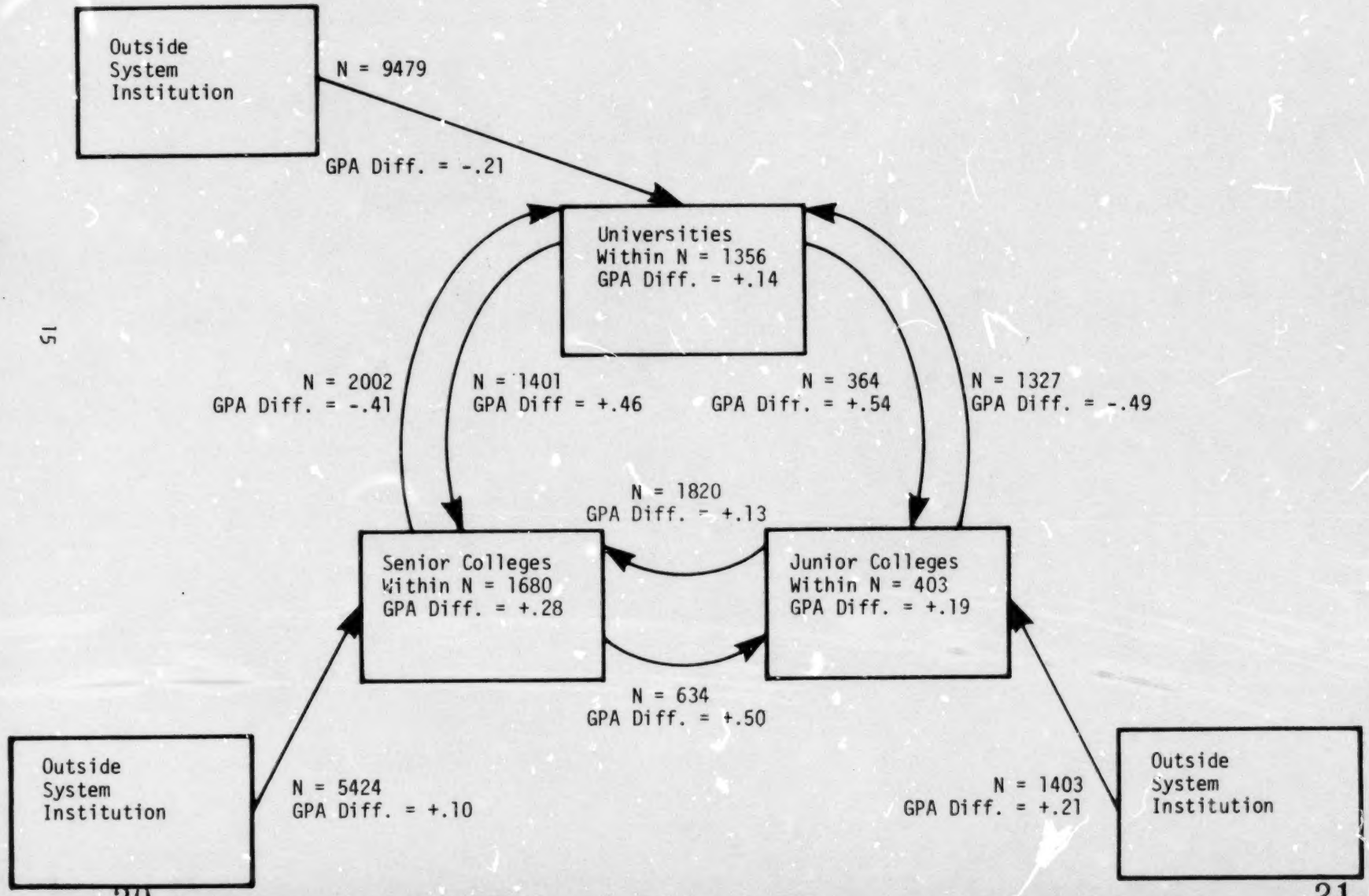
Outside System Institution
N = 9479
GPA Diff. = -.21
Universities Within N = 1356 GPA Diff. = +.14
N = 2002 GPA Diff. = -.41
N = 1401 GPA Diff = +.46
N = 364 GPA Diff. = +.54
N = 1327 GPA Diff. = -.49
N = 1820 GPA Diff. = +.13
Senior Colleges Within N = 1680 GPA Diff. = +.28
Junior Colleges Within N = 403 GPA Diff. = +.19
N = 634 GPA Diff. = +.50
Outside System Institution
N = 5424 GPA Diff. = +.10
N = 1403 GPA Diff. = +.21
Outside System Institution

Figure 5

Undergraduate Transfer Activity by Type of Institution for White Males

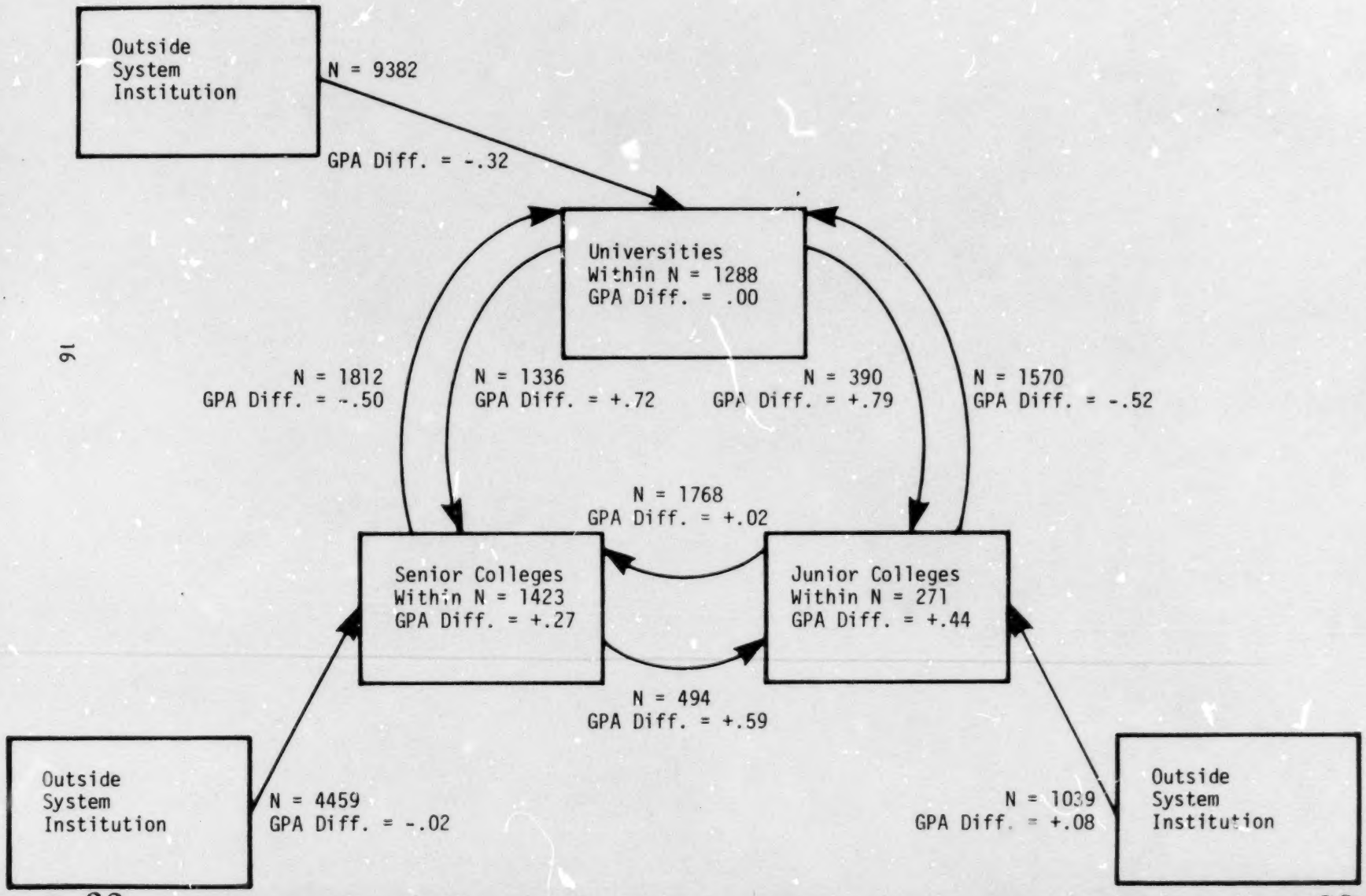
Outside System Institution
N = 9382
GPA Diff. = -.32
Universities Within N = 1288 GPA Diff. = .00
N = 1812 GPA Diff. = -.50
N = 1336 GPA Diff. = +.72
N = 390 GPA Diff. = +.79
N = 1570 GPA Diff. = -.52
N = 1768 GPA Diff. = +.02
Senior Colleges Within N = 1423 GPA Diff. = +.27
Junior Colleges Within N = 271 GPA Diff. = +.44
N = 494 GPA Diff. = +.59
Outside System Institution
N = 4459 GPA Diff. = -.02
N = 1039 GPA Diff. = +.08
Outside System Institution

Table 1

Undergraduate Transfer Activity Among Institutions
by Individual Type of Institutions

	Receiving Institution	Sending Institution								
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
I	Technical University		130	151	31	29	27	26	5	36
II	State University	470		1522	242	327	83	387	313	598
	Medical School	3	21	172	32	7	0	10	4	2
III	State University	0	308		420	154	16	253	10	99
	Traditionally Minority	3	9	23	8	2	1	3	6	0
	Commuter Senior College	15	12	81	151	0	8	12	2	4
	Commuter Senior College	27	16	161	132	1	12	9	0	1
	Commuter Senior College	13	22	92	15	4	1	25	2	3
	Traditionally Minority	3	5	6	8	3	0	3	0	1
	Senior College	31	23	205	119	7	4	25	0	10
IV	Senior College	17	41	208		17	12	22	2	22
	Senior College	12	18	107	39	1	0	22	1	10
V	Commuter Senior College	64	221	204	68		109	196	24	30
	Military College	8	11	81	13	8	0	18	0	6
	Traditionally Minority	0	4	9	22	1	2	3	3	2
VI	Technical College	361	88	72	41	188		49	42	48
	Senior College	18	37	213	135	7	0	20	0	0
VII	Senior College	22	138	182	48	82	24		10	63
	Agricultural Junior College	0	0	5	6	1	0	0	0	0
	Community College	8	7	37	9	1	3	4	1	0
VIII	Community College	12	116	32	1	2	9	77		13
	Community College	3	2	19	4	0	0	0	0	0
	Community College	3	2	15	19	3	1	2	0	4
IX	Community College	37	89	51	25	8	18	86	15	
	Community College	4	5	35	3	1	4	24	0	0
	Community College	2	1	5	27	0	5	2	0	1
	Community College	3	5	16	2	3	1	28	1	0
	Community College	23	8	168	24	2	23	40	0	4
	Junior College	2	2	13	5	0	0	10	0	7
	Community College	38	13	113	73	4	4	18	0	5
	Junior College	20	0	14	28	0	7	4	1	4
	Junior College	3	2	7	20	0	1	2	1	1
	Community College	1	6	12	13	0	0	0	0	1

Table 2

Undergraduate Transfer Activity Among Institutions
by Individual Type of Institution

Sending Institution		Receiving Institution								
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
I	Technical University		470	0	17	64	361	22	12	37
II	State University	130		308	41	221	88	138	116	89
	Medical School	2	31	37	3	3	1	6	0	0
III	State University	151	1522		206	204	72	182	32	51
	Traditionally Minority	1	39	15	7	3	0	10	10	1
	Commuter Senior College	28	59	146	204	7	9	2	1	2
	Commuter Senior College	39	59	191	8	10	12	2	1	1
	Commuter Senior College	29	113	134	8	10	20	31	4	4
	Traditionally Minority	2	25	26	6	1	3	7	13	1
	Senior College	13	103	215	62	17	11	30	6	6
IV	Senior College	31	242	420		68	41	48	1	25
	Senior College	5	38	79	30	13	1	19	4	2
V	Commuter Senior College	29	327	154	17		188	82	0	8
	Military College	16	115	180	14	36	11	25	3	4
	Traditionally Minority	4	36	23	51	1	12	10	17	0
VI	Technical College	27	83	96	12	109		24	9	18
	Senior College	18	129	209	54	26	12	28	3	9
VII	Senior College	26	387	253	22	196	49		77	86
	Agricultural Junior College	14	25	319	84	16	20	10	2	9
	Community College	21	33	142	25	2	16	6	4	2
VIII	Community College	5	313	10	2	24	42	10		15
	Community College	0	5	39	7	0	7	2	0	0
	Community College	18	30	63	92	7	15	6	1	2
IX	Community College	36	598	99	22	30	48	63	13	
	Community College	15	21	95	5	11	21	71	0	0
	Community College	2	4	54	104	6	2	1	0	1
	Community College	13	39	74	3	49	22	125	5	3
	Community College	17	67	296	30	8	38	42	1	3
	Junior College	18	56	129	32	1	11	60	8	25
	Community College	29	43	138	40	10	21	11	5	5
	Junior College	58	36	178	167	15	41	17	5	10
	Junior College	13	14	53	94	4	6	6	3	1
	Community College	3	1	22	37	0	10	4	1	0

Table 3

Over or Under Predicted Performance for Undergraduate Transfer Students
Among Institutions by Individual Type of Institutions

	Receiving Institution	Sending Institution								
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
I	Technical University									
II	State University	.40		.12	-.06	-.01	-.05	-.02	-.80	.18
	Medical School		.54	.41	.51			.65		
III	State University		.05		.01	-.02	.09	-.10	-.46	.07
	Traditionally Minority									
	Commuter Senior College	.08	-.03	-.05	-.13		-.05	-.38		
	Commuter Senior College	.62	.12	.27	-.02			-.28		
	Commuter Senior College	1.07	.62	.22	.03			-.10		
	Traditionally Minority									
	Senior College	.76	.70	.43	.16	.53		-.22		
IV	Senior College	.35	.07	.11		.27		.02		.21
	Senior College									
V	Commuter Senior College	.76	.26	.33	.12			-.16	-.94	-.10
	Military College	.88		.09		.27		-.42		.15
	Traditionally Minority				-.15					
VI	Technical College	.50	.20	.04	.10	.10		-.17	-.55	.14
	Senior College	.64	.41	.45	.42			-.05		
VII	Senior College	.25	.14	-.05	-.32	-.08			-.48	-.07
	Agricultural Junior College									
	Community College	.82	.48	.19	-.02					
VIII	Community College		.48					.17		
	Community College									
	Community College									
IX	Community College	.21	.24	.19	-.26			-.13	-.88	
	Community College			.54				-.27		
	Community College				.54					
	Community College		.46	.29				.12		
	Community College			.21	.18			.09		
	Junior College			-.14				.10		.25
	Community College			.59	.21					
	Junior College	.55		.45	.53					
	Junior College				.21					
	Community College			.01	.39					
	Total	.50	.22	.19	.03	.03	.08	-.07	-.76	.16

Table 4

Over or Under Predicted Performance for Undergraduate Transfer Students
Among Institutions by Individual Type of Institutions

	Sending Institution	Receiving Institution								
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
I	Technical University		.40		.35	.76	.50	.25		.21
II	State University			.05	.07	.26	.20	.14	.48	.24
	Medical School		.24							
III	State University		.12		.11	.33	.04	-.05		.19
	Traditionally Minority		-.74		-.26			-.38		
	Commuter Senior College		-.02	.07	.02		.18			
	Commuter Senior College		.23	.06	.01		.09			
	Commuter Senior College		-.37	-.16		.57		-.22		
	Traditionally Minority		-.99	-.33						
	Senior College		-.13	-.01	.05	.08	-.12	.04		
IV	Senior College		-.06	.01		.12	.10	-.32		-.26
	Senior College		-.31	-.21	.03	-.08		.17		.09
V	Commuter Senior College		-.01	-.02	.27		.10	-.08		
	Military College		-.04	.04	-.34	-.04	.16	.33		
	Traditionally Minority		-.66	-.18	-.39		-.59			
VI	Technical College		-.05	.09						
	Senior College		.07	.03	.13	-.38	.01	-.24		
VII	Senior College		-.02	-.10	.02	-.16	-.17		.17	-.13
	Agricultural Junior College		-.28	-.12	-.01	-.44	-.04	-.24		
	Community College		-.28	-.06	.09		-.20	.25		
VIII	Community College		-.80	-.46		-.94	-.55	-.48		-.88
	Community College			-.22						
	Community College		-.13	-.08	.05		-.07			
IX	Community College		.18	.07	.21	-.10	.14	-.07		
	Community College		-.33	-.06			-.05	.09		
	Community College			.05	-.07					
	Community College		.27	-.14		-.31	-.19	-.17		
	Community College		-.09	-.15	-.24		-.08	-.08		
	Junior College		-.09	-.11	-.06		-.12	-.07		-.14
	Community College		.22	-.01	.03		-.05	-.31		-.23
	Junior College		-.45	-.20	-.25		-.27	-.21		.13
	Junior College		-.79	-.24	-.18		-.04			
	Community College			.32	.08		.37			
	Total		-.04	-.04	-.07	.12	.03	-.13	.22	.01